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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/30/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [LY](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: QADHAFI AND WADE PULL SIERRA LEONE'S PUPPET STRINGS

REF: A. FREETOWN 604
[1](#)B. RASPOLIC E-MAIL 12/30/2008

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Though rumors abounded throughout Freetown on the evening of December 29 and morning of December 30 that the reftel A visit was canceled, Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi will reportedly land at Lungi Airport on a private plane at approximately 1530 local time. Following a brief stop in Sierra Leone to meet with President Koroma, Qadhafi will depart for an unknown destination, but will return on December 31 for a meeting with Guinean junta Vice President General Mamadouba Toto Camara. High-level representatives from the Government of Sierra Leone are making clear to their allies that their hosting role was forced upon them by Qadhafi and Senegalese President Wade. End Summary.

GUESS WHO'S NOT COMING TO DINNER? OR IS HE?

[1](#)2. (C) Per reftel A, Qadhafi's visit was expected due to media reports and subsequent confirmation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on December 29. Members of the diplomatic corps were due to meet Qadhafi in a welcoming party the morning of December 30, but these plans were canceled by MFA protocol the evening of December 29. The reason for the cancellation, emboffs were told, was that Qadhafi had changed his mind.

[1](#)3. (C) Rumors and conflicting stories raced through Freetown the morning of December 30. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Zainab Bangura confirmed to Ambassador that Qadhafi would arrive in Sierra Leone that afternoon, while the President's personal assistant reportedly told the British Charge of his planned arrival on December 31. Though previously shared information suggested that Qadhafi would be in-country until January 2, Minister Bangura informed Ambassador that his stay would be brief, and that he would be traveling to additional West African destinations, including Liberia and Mali.

[1](#)4. (C) At 1445 local time, a high-level State House source confirmed to DCM that Qadhafi will be landing at Lungi at approximately 1530 on December 30. He will meet with President Koroma at an undisclosed location, and then depart Sierra Leone to stay elsewhere for the night, returning on December 31. The source did not clarify the potential topics of discussion between Koroma and Qadhafi.

GUESS WHICH CAMARA IS COMING TO DINNER?

[1](#)5. (C) Though Emboffs were not explicitly told that Qadhafi would be meeting with Guinean regime leader Captain Moussa Camara, the inference was clear in the diplomatic corps meeting December 29, and reiterated by the Foreign Minister

to Ambassador the following morning. However, ref B stated Embassy Conakry's awareness of a planned meeting at the border between Qadhafi and General Mamadouba Toto Camara, Captain Camara's appointed Vice President on December 30. The State House source confirmed December 30 that General Camara will meet with Qadhafi, though on December 31 and possibly in Freetown.

16. (C) Current information suggests that General Camara will travel onwards to Liberia, Mali, and Senegal, partially coinciding with Qadhafi's planned West African stops. DCM was told that Camara will use a private plane to fly from Conakry to Sierra Leone, and then presumably to his onward destinations.

GUESS WHO ISN'T INVITED TO DINNER?

17. (C) The State House source told DCM that Qadhafi and Senegalese President Wade are pulling the strings on this visit, with Wade coordinating travel and providing Camara's plane. The source said that Koroma is intent on clarifying that Sierra Leone supports the regional position on the coup. Information from sources within the President's protective detail indicate that Koroma will not necessarily be included in the Guinean-Libyan summit. Given that Qadhafi invited himself to Sierra Leone, made arrangements and sent an advance team allegedly prior to officially notifying the GoSL, and has kept everyone guessing about his intentions, Koroma's possible exclusion from the session is unsurprising.

COMMENT

18. (C) The GoSL appears to feel it has no choice but be a gracious host to Qadhafi and Camara, even though it is being forced to jump through constantly changing hoops to accommodate them. Given Wade's apparent machinations to ensure the junta's travel, as well as Qadhafi's plans to also travel to Liberia and Mali, it is unclear why Sierra Leone was chosen as an initial meeting place and what, if any, role the GoSL will play. End Comment.
PERRY